

Colorectal Cancer

Colorectal Cancer in the U.S.

Colorectal cancer is the third most common cancer among U.S. men and women, following prostate and lung cancer in men and breast and lung cancer in women. Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer deaths in the U.S. According to the 1998 American Cancer Society, *Cancer Facts & Figures*, an estimated 131,600 people in the U.S. were diagnosed with colorectal cancer and the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) reports that 56,973 people died from this disease. Until the mid 1980's, colorectal cancer was diagnosed as often among African Americans as Whites; however, in the mid 1980's White rates began to decline while African American rates did not. Similarly, the rate of death from colorectal cancer has been slowly declining among Whites since 1978, while it continues to remain steady among African Americans. Industrialized countries in North America and Western Europe tend to have much higher rates of colorectal cancer cases and deaths than the less industrialized countries in Africa and Asia.

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Risk Factors for Colorectal Cancer

Studies over many years have shown several factors to be associated with colorectal cancer:

- A personal or family history of colorectal polyps or cancer
- Not exercising
- Eating a lot of red meat and saturated fat
- Not eating a lot of fruits and vegetables

Prevention of Colorectal Cancer

The most effective ways now known to reduce our chances of getting colon cancer may be the following:

- Eating a diet low in red meat and animal fat
- Eating a diet high in fruits and vegetables (at least five servings a day)
- Getting some exercise every day
- Getting screened for colon polyps after age 50

Early Detection of Colorectal Cancer

Why is early detection important?

- Cases detected early (local disease) have about a 90% chance of living for at least five more years.
- Cases detected at the distant stage (when disease has spread to another part of the body) have only a 9% chance of living for five more years.

How to Improve your Chances of Detecting Colorectal Cancer Early

The average-risk person 50 years of age or older, should have one of the following tests to screen for colorectal cancer. You and your health care provider should discuss which test is best for you.

- Home stool-blood test every year
OR
- Sigmoidoscopy every 5 years
OR
- Home stool-blood test every year **AND** sigmoidoscopy every 5 years
OR
- Colonoscopy every 10 years
OR
- Double contrast barium enema every 5-10 years

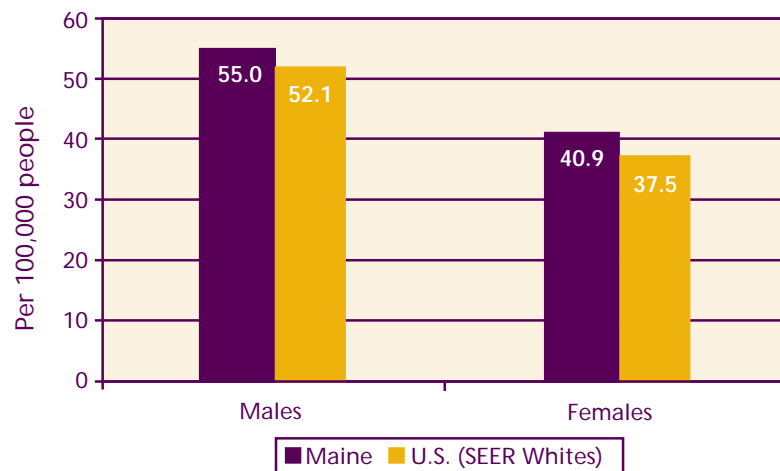
If you have risk factors (for example you or a family member has a history of colon cancer or polyps), **you should talk to your health care provider about the best way to be screened.**

Burden of Colorectal Cancer in Maine

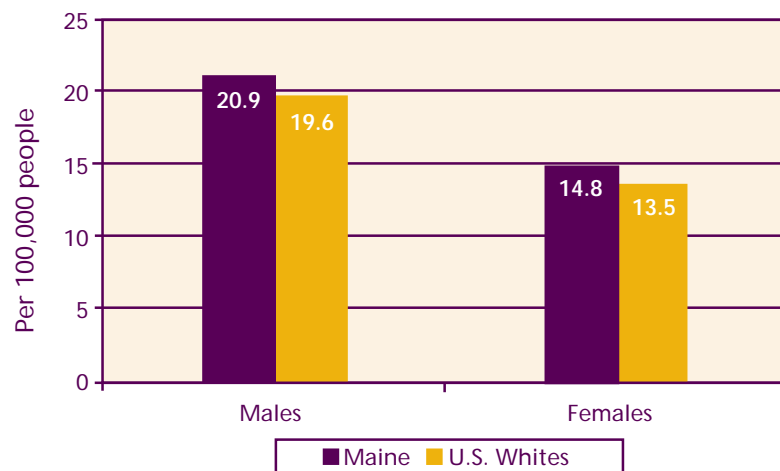
- Between 1997 and 1998, 404 men and 408 women each year were diagnosed with colorectal cancer on average.
- On average, 154 men and 167 women died from colorectal cancer each year.
- Over 80% of new cases in Maine occur in men and women over 60 years old.

The age-adjusted incidence rate for colorectal cancer in Maine women was statistically higher than the U.S. The rate for Maine men was not statistically different than the U.S.

Age-Adjusted Incidence Rates by Sex, Maine and U.S.
Colorectal Cancer, 1997-1998

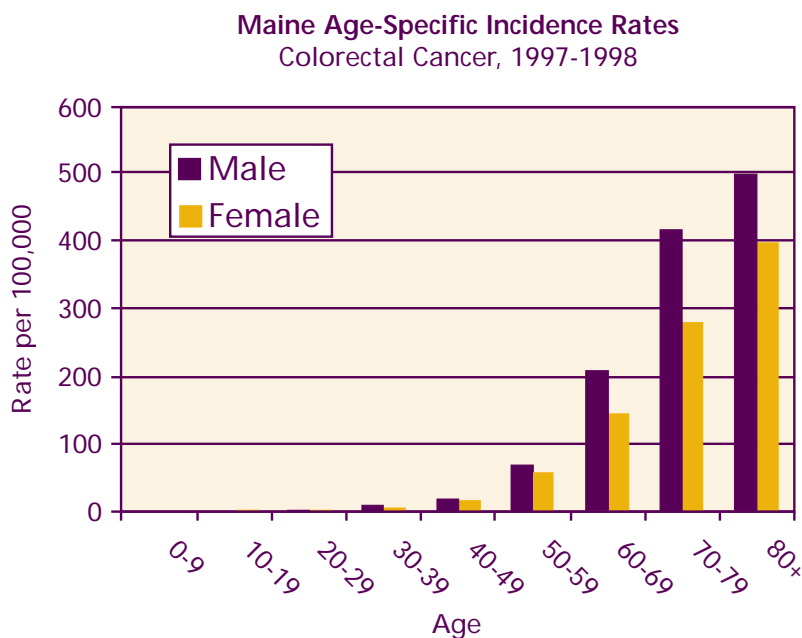


Age-Adjusted Mortality Rates by Sex, Maine and U.S.
Colorectal Cancer, 1997-1998



The age-adjusted mortality rates for colorectal cancer in Maine were not statistically different from the U.S. rates.

Colorectal cancer is more common in older people.



Within Maine, no single county is statistically different from the Maine rate.
(See Incidence Rates, page 43, for 95% confidence intervals.)

Maine = 47.0
National (SEER¹ Whites) = 43.9

1 Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results

Maine Age-Adjusted Colorectal Cancer Incidence Rates by County
1997-1998

